DEMOCRACY OR DESPOTISM.

179

A PUBLIC MEETING,

CONVENED BY THE

WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION,

WILL BE HELD IN THE LARGE ROOM OF THE

Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand,

ON MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 3d, AT SEVEN O'CLOCK PRECISELY,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASCERTAINING

Whether the People of England and Ireland will sanction the base proposals of the Whigs to destroy the Principle of Universal Suffrage in the Canadas, and to compel the People of that Country to be plundered and enslaved by a few official and irresponsible Persons.

WILLIAM HOARE in the Chair.

By Order of the Committee, W. LOVETT, *Secretary.*

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED,

The Petition of the undersigned Members of the Working Men's Association and others, sheweth—

That your petitioners are deeply impressed with the conviction that the colonial policy of England has for many centuries past been fraught with tyranny and injustice towards the mass of the people.

That by far the greater number of our colonies have been originated by means noways justifiable on principles of morality, and to establish and secure which, have millions of money been wasted, and millions of our brethren been doomed to an untimely end.

That when, by these sacrifices, they have been secured, instead of regarding them as auxiliaries to the progress of civilization, and teaching them the most efficient means of developing their natural resources, so as to promote the general welfare of humanity, we seem to have considered them as legitimate objects of our prey, or as places where the shoots and underlings of despotism might practice their oppression, shameless, and regardless of consequences.

That the history of our colonial government in the Canadas is pregnant with evils springing from such a source; and now, after years of complaints and petitioning for justice, we find your honourable house about to stifle their supplications by as wanton and flagrant an act of despotism as that which, when imposed on the American people, aroused them to proclaim their celebrated Declaration of Independence.

That, regarding the people of Canada as brothers in interests, we have carefully investigated into their grievances, a brief outline of which we respectfully submit to your honourable house, in order that the working classes of England may determine how far they will sanction the outrage about to be inflicted on their Canadian brethren, by your house as at present constituted; how far they will suffer a brave and oppressed people to be effectually enslaved, to glut the appetites of hungry officials, or the peculating delinquents of an insignificant party.

The Canadians inform us that though they possess an extension of the suffrage almost universal, and have representatives in the House of Assembly honestly seeking to promote the welfare and happiness of the whole people—that these inestimable blessings are rendered nearly useless by the intolerable despotism of the Legislative and Executive Councils, whose selfish powers are exercised in thwarting the wants and wishes of the people.

That the Legislative Council is chosen for life by the King of England; that it is for the most part composed of government officers, their clerks, their dependents, the clergy of the Established Church, and a few successful merchants; and that this assembly is responsible to none but the King of England, acting through the officials of the Colonial Office. They complain that this is a body factiously opposed to the feelings and wants of the people; that it is the stronghold of oppression and abuses, and that all the beneficial measures of the House of Assembly are rendered useless by this irresponsible body.

They complain that the Executive Council, or privy-council of the governor, being composed of the judges and government officers, responsible only to the King (or rather the Colonial Office), have taken all the waste lands of the colony, as well as the saleable timber found thereon, which they dispose of for the personal advantage of their members, their friends, and underlings; as well as for corrupting the representation of the people; and, with the unjust plea of their being the hereditary possessions of the King, deprive the Canadians of the means of improving their country, or educating their children.

They complain that their judges are not made responsible to the people, nor can they be impeached for misconduct by the House of Assembly, as English judges can by the Commons' House of Parliament; that they are only responsible to the Executive Council, of which *they themselves form a part*, and that by this irresponsibility the source of justice is poisoned, and cases of the grossest peculation and delinquency have received the countenance and support of this body.

They complain that notwithstanding *four-fifths* of the inhabitants are Catholics in religion, and that men of all creeds and religious opinions live harmoniously amongst them, that a dominant church is set up; and religious prejudices are sought to be engendered by the application of *one-seventh* of the whole land of the colony to support the clergy of the Established Church of England.

They complain that the official party seek to foment the absurd prejudices of country and religion amongst them; that the whole administration of government is one of favouritism and injustice; that the revenues of their country are employed and squandered away by persons not responsible to the people; that they are unable to get accurate accounts of receipts or expenditure; and when delinquency is detected, are refused the power to punish or prevent it in future.

And now, after bearing with these insults and oppressions for nearly half a century—after every effort to improve their country by wise and salutary laws, has been frustrated by these united aristocrat powers, and after repeated applications and petitions for justice—they have almost unanimously declared that there is no hope for the adoption of wise laws and just government, *until the Legislative Council be elected by the people, the whole revenue placed under the control of the people, and their judges made responsible to their own Legislature instead of the King of England.*

These reasonable requests having been scorned and scouted by those in power, the people of Canada have, for the last three years, refused to sanction, by the vote of their assembly, the application of the public revenue towards paying the salaries of those official persons who continue to mar all their benevolent exertions for the public weal.

Instead, however, of your honourable house honestly investigating into these grievances, or conceding to those just and reasonable demands, we find you sanctioning his Majesty's Ministers in setting aside the people and their representatives altogether, dispensing with their necessary vote, as guaranteed by their charter, and paying the salaries of those official persons in spite of the Canadian people.

This conduct appearing to your petitioners to be highly tyrannical—involving the question of liberty for the many, or despotic rule for the few—and which injustice we feel satisfied, will never be tamely submitted to by the Canadian people, especially when they have the history of the past, and the bright example of the present democracy of America to refer to, of what can be effected by an united people, when free from the mercenary grasp of aristocratic or kingly dominion. Your petitioners, therefore,

Pray your honourable house, that you will yield to the wishes of the Canadians, and allow them to elect the Legislative Council—place the revenue of their country at their disposal—and allow their judges to be made responsible to their own Legislature instead of to the King of England.

And your Petitioners, &c.